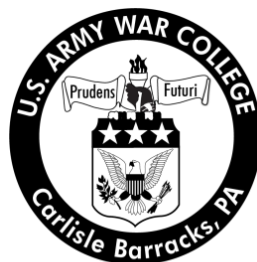


## The United States in Pakistan: Toward a More Unified Effort

by

Lieutenant Colonel Anthony DeMartino  
United States Army



United States Army War College  
Class of 2012

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## **ABSTRACT**

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This paper considers the relationship between the U.S and Pakistan since 9/11, recognizing that the U.S. has had limited success in achieving its goals in-Pakistan. Specifically, this paper asks: how can the U.S. move forward in Pakistan to better achieve its long-term security aims? Since 2001, the U.S. has largely failed to effectively influence Pakistan's strategic calculus and behavior – a necessary objective to achieve the U.S. aim to disrupt, dismantle, and eventually defeat al Qaeda in its Pakistani safehavens. Indeed, former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Mike Mullen recently suggested in public what many officials have privately known for some time – that the current approach is not working. This paper explores the state of the U.S.-Pakistan relationship by evaluating the quality of the U.S. whole-of-government approach and our ability to achieve unity of effort in how we engage Pakistan. This paper finds that the U.S. approach to Pakistan had lacked unity of effort in at least three important ways. Consequently, this paper argues that the U.S. must synchronize its efforts across the interagency spectrum to be more effective at influencing Pakistan's strategic calculus. This paper makes specific recommendations for improving U.S. unity of effort within a more realistic and potentially more effective strategic approach to Pakistan.





## THE UNITED STATES IN PAKISTAN: TOWARD A MORE UNIFIED EFFORT

“...for all the improvements of recent years, the United States interagency tool kit is still a hodgepodge of jury-rigged arrangements constrained by a dated and complex patchwork of authorities, persistent shortfalls in resources, and unwieldy processes.”

Secretary of Defense Robert Gates <sup>1</sup>

The September 11, 2001 attacks changed the fundamental orientation of U.S. policy in the Near East region and escalated government efforts to a war footing in Afghanistan. The United States went from ignoring Pakistan after it went nuclear in the 1990s to making Pakistan a centerpiece of U.S. national security policy since 2001. Although Pakistan remains at the center today, how best to achieve our aims remains a particularly complex and high-stakes problem for the United States. If anything, since 9/11, Pakistan's importance has continued to expand for both the United States and the rest of the world. And, as former Secretary of Defense Robert Gates noted, with this expansion comes a similarly increasing degree of complexity and challenge.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, President Obama declared that no issue on his foreign policy agenda was more important than Pakistan, which he has described as the “epicenter of the global terrorist threat that confronts the United States.”<sup>3</sup> Yet, despite the clear articulation of the importance of Pakistan, Washington's current strategy and the way we go about implementing that strategy is not working. Any gains the U.S. has bought with aid and engagement have come at an extremely high price and have been more than offset by Pakistan's tacit support for groups that continue to conduct hostile action against the U.S. and our allies.

When we think of Pakistan, we often think of Al-Qaeda and its allied transnational terrorist organizations; however, Pakistan is much more than just a counter-terrorism problem for the United States. It is the sixth-largest country in the world in terms of population. It also has a high birth rate and soon, it will be the fifth-largest country in the world.<sup>4</sup> When this occurs, Pakistan will also be the largest Muslim country in the world, larger than even Indonesia. Pakistan also has the fastest growing and fourth-largest nuclear arsenal in the world, with only the U.S., Russia, and China having more nuclear weapons.<sup>5</sup> Clearly, the relationship with Pakistan is among the most important strategic relationships for the United States. Given its geography and role on the world stage, Pakistan will remain important for the indefinite future. And, because of the challenges from within and perceived challenges from without, it will remain a major foreign policy conundrum for the U.S. despite the investment of billions of dollars in aid, three military alliances, and the high stakes of the war being fought by its Afghan neighbor and NATO.<sup>6</sup>

How can the United States address such a complex problem? The Obama Administration recognizes that one of the most critical keys to success when dealing with multi-faceted problems like Pakistan is fostering interagency unity of effort. Indeed, recognizing that American service members cannot possibly carry the burden alone to address the complex challenges of today, the White House *National Security Strategy* seeks a whole of government approach to ensure that the whole of U.S. efforts abroad is greater than the sum of its parts.<sup>7</sup> Historically, the U.S. Government (USG) has struggled to consolidate its response to a major situation – that is, sharing relevant information in order to create unity of purpose while preserving the operational

effectiveness of each separate agency or government component. The ability to tackle multi-faceted problems is difficult for any large organization, but particularly so across the spectrum of federal agencies, where the organizational cultures and ways of communicating vary widely.

While there has been much talk about the so-called interagency as if it were an entity itself, the interagency is actually an elusive concept of voluntary associations of federal departments and organizations, each having its own culture, operating procedures, jargon, and rules. There is no unifying interagency authority, except for the President, who can authoritatively sit atop the entire USG. Each federal department or federal agency has its own leader, budget, career progression, and mission. That said, there is little incentive to cooperate, and the system often rewards so-called “empire builders” above team players. This is best seen in the struggle for budget authority, which is usually a zero sum game. While one might think that broad governmental experience by any federal employee is a plus, service outside of one’s own agency or department is rarely seen as career enhancing. All of these factors lead to a decentralized and inefficient interagency process that further complicates the USG’s ability to seize opportunity and create real gains in the nuanced problem set that is today’s Pakistan.<sup>8</sup>

### **A Closer Look at the Problem: Lack of USG Unity of Effort**

As has been extensively documented, a major problem in the operation of the U.S. government is the difficulty, if not the inability, to delegate authority below the Presidential level across department and agency borders and fiefdoms.<sup>9</sup> In recent

decades, Congress and the President – no matter the political party – have implemented a wide range of reforms to improve the horizontal integration capabilities and effectiveness of the executive branch, but with little real change. The unstated goal of this horizontal integration is to create the same unity of effort this paper examines.

Because so many problems “cut across a swath of agencies,” according to former White House Chief of Staff John Podesta, integrating the work of multiple departments and agencies is an increasingly significant challenge for the modern presidency. The need to integrate the activities of the departments and agencies to good effect is especially urgent in the realm of national security. Even before the attacks of September 11, 2001, prestigious national blue ribbon panels like the Hart-Rudman Commission were pointing out the need for better interagency coordination.<sup>10</sup> Blue ribbon panels, years after 9/11 and the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, are still highlighting a persistent and debilitating lack of interagency cooperation. According to observers of the recent U.S. efforts in our current conflicts, “everywhere we looked, we found important (and obvious) issues of interagency coordination that went unattended, sensible community-wide proposals blocked by pockets of resistance, and critical disputes left to fester.”<sup>11</sup> Virtually all scholarly assessments of the national security system similarly conclude that the national security system suffers from inadequate interagency collaboration.<sup>12</sup>

In Pakistan, lack of unity of effort hinders U.S. policy development, the credibility and continuity of USG strategic messaging, and the USG’s ability to achieve its strategic objectives in the Pakistan-Afghanistan region. In its evaluation of USG unity of effort in Pakistan, this study finds that there are two main faults with the U.S. approach. First,

the USG has done little to engender unified effort. Second, and perhaps as a consequence of the first, the USG is pursuing various and often competing ways to achieve the President's ends in Pakistan. In other words, what the USG does to make headway along one line of effort (which is often associated with the interests of one Department) often directly conflicts with what it is trying to do along another line of effort (most often associated with another Department.) For example, as the administration surged troop levels in Afghanistan to satisfy the recommendations of Defense officials, the White House simultaneously announced plans for withdrawal to satisfy the recommendations of politically oriented White House officials. The withdrawal decision weakened the resolve and messaging of the additional troop commitment to the region. Likewise, despite State Department officials' overtures supporting a more trust-based relationship with Pakistan, defense and intelligence officials remain reluctant to include Pakistan in reconciliation talks with the Taliban.<sup>13</sup> Given the lack of unified effort toward Pakistan, it is no surprise that an improved U.S.-Pakistan strategic partnership has never materialized and, in fact, is actually worse off than it was before the Afghan surge.<sup>14</sup>

It remains unclear to the Pakistanis who the lead USG actor with Pakistan, and even more important, which agency has primacy for decision-making with regards to U.S. foreign policy toward Pakistan. As a result, there have been several instances when senior U.S. officials delivered one particular message; then, another senior U.S. leader delivered a different and conflicting message to the Pakistanis. While these shifts in policy might often make sense in the context of the crisis of the day – whether it be the killing of Osama bin Laden on Pakistani soil or the detention of Central

Intelligence Agency operative Raymond Davis for killing two Pakistani civilians – these day-to-day fluctuations in USG policy hinder real progress over the long term. For example, the United States justified giving \$20 billion in aid money to Pakistan over the past 11 years by stating, as former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice did in 2008, that the Government of Pakistan “does not in any way want to be associated with terrorist elements and is indeed fighting to root them out wherever [Pakistani officials] find them.”<sup>15</sup> Yet, in the face of the Davis and bin Laden crises, USG leaders now state the exact opposite. Specifically, former Joint Chiefs Chairman Mullen bluntly criticized Pakistan in late 2011, telling Congress that “extremist organizations serv[e] as proxies for the government of Pakistan [and] are attacking Afghan troops and civilians as well as U.S. soldiers.” He went on to state that the Haqqani network “is, in many ways, a strategic arm of Pakistan’s Inter-Services Intelligence Agency (ISI).”<sup>16</sup>

Such observations from such a senior U.S. official might suggest a new overarching strategic approach to Pakistan. Yet, within days of his statements, both military and civilian officials began walking away from Mullen’s remarks. Far from the beginning of a new strategic approach, Mullen’s remarks comprised simply another example of the lack of unity of effort in the U.S. approach to Pakistan and represented a lone senior official’s final testimony and frustration with what had been achieved vis-à-vis Pakistan.<sup>17</sup>

### **What it Takes to Achieve Interagency Unity of Effort**

Improving interagency collaboration is a perennial and increasingly important issue. Virtually all serious observers of national security affairs recognize that the

current structure of the national security system prohibits unity of effort, especially when the problem is a multi-agency issue. In response, an increasing number of informed commentators are recommending a number of changes to the national security system ranging from minor organizational changes to sweeping reform on the scale of Goldwater-Nichols.<sup>18</sup> Yet, given the scale of the problem described above, minor organizational tweaks might not be enough. Likewise, Goldwater-Nichols-type reforms, if they are even feasible, would take too long to implement in order to affect the critically important U.S. approach to today's problems in Pakistan. Clearly, to unify USG efforts in Pakistan in a timeframe that remains relevant, the USG must consider a middle ground approach that builds on the simpler steps available to unify interagency efforts in the face of this complex strategic problem.

Fortunately, at least one important historical example of USG interagency unity of effort exists. In a recent examination of current interagency doctrine which used The U.S. involvement in the Greek Civil War of the 1950's as an example of a successful unified USG effort, one recent paper uncovered at least three critical components of interagency unity of effort.<sup>19</sup> These three elements include mission-focused organization, shared vision, and selfless cooperation. The first element, mission focused organization, requires interagency organizations organized and built specifically to tackle a foreign policy challenge (as was intended in creating the office of the Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, or SRAP). The second element, shared vision, requires synchronization of strategic messaging as well as strategic action – which is a critical part of what has hindered U.S.-Pakistan relations. The third element, selfless cooperation, is characterized by the individual organizations

agreeing that the overall shared vision and course will take precedence over the sometimes separate and competing missions of select parts of the interagency and ensure the ability to take unified action. It is easy to see how, in Pakistan, this element is also lacking. For example, while drone strikes have been effective in improving security by eliminating terrorists, the same strikes continue to be a source of friction that may, in the long run, prevent achieving U.S. stated strategic aims with regards to making Pakistan a more stable partner in the region, promoting improved prosperity instead of continued instability.

Improved unity of effort is the major requirement for USG foreign policy efforts towards Pakistan. And, good unity of effort requires mission-focused organization, shared vision and selfless cooperation; it will be useful to examine in depth how the USG has fostered – or, failed to foster – each of these three requirements. In the next section, this paper considers the history of the U.S.-Pakistan strategic relationship and peels back the specifics of U.S. interagency action and decisions. In doing so, this paper demonstrates that there has been limited interagency unit of effort and that any achievements that the United States has achieved were short-lived.

### **Analysis of USG Unity of Effort in Pakistan**

#### ***The PACC: Handicapping a Unique Mission-Focused Organization***

The Pakistan-Afghanistan Coordination Cell (PACC) was formed in June 2009 by Admiral Mike Mullen and General Stanley McChrystal, then the director of the Joint Staff, to provide what Mullen called "a real-time view of the battlefield." The PACC was inspired in part by Mullen's visit a few years ago prior to Chicago mayor Richard Daley's



crisis-command center, an operational nucleus where data from police, fire, waste-management, and other city departments come together.<sup>20</sup> The purpose of the PACC was to bring together the various directorates of the Joint Staff -- operations, logistics, policy, and planning -- and put them together in one room, breaking down the silo walls that had previously kept the different sections of the Pentagon from communicating and collaborating as efficiently and effectively as possible. In effect, establishing the PACC was an attempt at creating a mission-focused organization – the first requirement for unity of effort. The mantra of the PACC was, “flatter and faster.” A motto hung on signs over the entranceway, which served as a constant reminder of the Chairman’s intent -- to “operate at the speed of war.”<sup>21</sup> Gen. McChrystal's decision to establish the PACC also included creating a corps of roughly 400 officers who would spend the next several years focused on the Afghanistan and Pakistan region, shuttling in and out of the country and working on issues related to the region even while they are stateside. These officers would be managed as a separate career track referred to as AFPAK Hands.<sup>22</sup> Despite all these efforts to develop a unique mission focused organization – one that initially contributed greatly to USG unity of effort – the PACC floundered in two ways. First, after about a year, the PACC became subsumed into the cumbersome bureaucratic hierarchy of the Joint Staff. Second, officers assigned to the PACC as AFPAK Hands began to realize that their long-term dedication to the mission in Pakistan and Afghanistan might eventually cost them their careers.

Initially, during the 2009 Presidential strategy review, the PACC played an important role in providing timely information to senior Defense and White House decision makers. Although it was technically a Joint Staff office, in reality it was a

unique interagency cell with liaisons to all USG agencies with equities in the AFPAK discussion. Indeed, Chairman Mullen credited the PACC for its unique ability to quickly provide comprehensively yet informally staffed responses to White House requests for information. Unfortunately, after the Afghan surge decision, because of institution pressure and desire by the different staff sections to reclaim some of the responsibility, the PACC reverted to using routine bureaucratic processes and became mired in the slower and more methodical processes that are characteristic of any large organization like the Joint Staff. For example, today the PACC no longer reports directly to the Director of the Joint Staff, and instead reports to a subordinate directorate within the Joint Staff. In effect, this added an additional layer in-between the information and the Chairman. Additionally, since the PACC is now an organization within the Strategic Plans and Policy Directorate (J-5), the PACC lost its ability to quickly and informally leverage expertise from other Joint Staff Directorates, as it did when the PACC was separate from the numbered directorates. In the end, the PACC became less of an interagency organization, and more focused on its slice of the mission – namely, those slices of the mission that pertain to the Joint Staff J-5.<sup>23</sup>

Although General McChystal's initial vision of building a seasoned corps of expert officers for the Afghan war remains one of the highest priorities of today's senior service leaders, the AFPAK Hands program has become stagnant with too few volunteers, a lack of quality within those volunteers, and limited support from the individual services. This program was conceived as a way to develop a pool of uniformed experts who would spend several years rotating between assignments in Afghanistan or Pakistan, and desk jobs in Washington or other headquarters working on

the same regional issues. In time, they were expected to provide a deep bench for assignments that could significantly alter the course of the war. Nevertheless, instead of being viewed as a career enhancing, upwardly mobile assignment, the perception based on how haphazardly the first few year groups have been managed, it is more commonly believed to be a career inhibitor and something to be avoided.<sup>24</sup>

The AFPAK Hands program promised to not only enable a mission-focused organization – a key requirement for unity of effort – it promised to develop a deep pool of manpower to serve in mission-focused organizations like the PACC. Unfortunately, since the AFPAK Hands program has become stagnant, and since the PACC is less of an interagency organization focused on the AFPAK mission as a whole, after its role during the surge debate in the USG, the true potential of the PACC as a mission-focused, interagency representative organization has never materialized and institutionalized.

### ***SRAP: a Missed Opportunity to Establish Shared Vision***

President Obama initially established the SRAP office within the Department of State to coordinate across the entire government and to better work toward achieving U.S. strategic goals in the region while engaging NATO and other key friends, allies, and those around the world who were interested in supporting those efforts. Eager to show how serious it was about Afghanistan and Pakistan, the Obama Administration created the SRAP post to reach “across the entire government,” in the words of Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. As the first SRAP, Ambassador Richard Holbrooke believed that the principal difference between the Obama Administration’s approach to

Pakistan and Afghanistan and that of the previous administration was its aim of better integrating “stove-piped” policies, which were believed to be one of the major challenges to U.S. goals in the region.<sup>25</sup> Clearly, by establishing the SRAP position, the Obama Administration sought to achieve the second component of unified effort: shared vision. Nevertheless, closer examination reveals that the SRAP office was unable to overcome many bureaucratic challenges and, by some accounts, might have been disempowered by other parts of the Administration. Consequently, without an effective SRAP, the Obama Administration missed an opportunity to fully establish a USG-wide shared vision for Pakistan.

Soon after the establishment of SRAP, a flurry of coordination took place within the USG. SRAP’s initial activities coincided with the publication of the president’s new strategy for Pakistan and Afghanistan, written by an interagency team and published in early 2009. In fact, the core goal of the March 2009 strategy remains valid to this day: to disrupt, to dismantle, and to eventually defeat al Qaeda. Over time, however, amidst all the “coordination,” powerful agencies and their leaders who were keen on preserving the parochial equities of their agencies began to ask, who *is* in charge of determining the U.S. stance in the region?

Despite the Administration’s best intentions, Holbrooke’s office never became the single point of entry for AFPAK policy issues. Council on Foreign Relations President Emeritus Leslie Gelb noted that “Dick Holbrooke would have been Obama’s best ally. Obama had just the right hammer he needed in Dick for dealing with Afghanistan and Pakistan. [Yet,] ... his staff’s failure to see that — really cost him and our country. What in God’s name would make you *not* make full use of Dick Holbrooke?”<sup>26</sup> At the

end of Ambassador Holbrooke's time as SRAP, his office had managed to cobble together an interagency task force and an intergovernmental contact group that came to include "special representatives" from more than 40 countries, including several Muslim nations. The results of this task force and the intergovernmental contact group remain minimal and have had little impact on the larger strategic debate. The main reason for this is the lack of agreed to goals and the fact that what the SRAP created was an interagency task force of the willing with little power to direct members on decisions regarding Pakistan.<sup>27</sup>

In reality, the SRAP position threatened senior members of the Obama staff, including James Jones, the retired Marine general and national-security adviser, as well as General Doug Lute, a holdover from the Bush administration and the "war czar" who sought to coordinate military efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan. For example, twice during SRAP's first eighteen months, Jones is reported to have told Holbrooke he should look for another position. Although Holbrooke ignored the hint and remained, White House officials did eventually find ways to muzzle Holbrooke by limiting his engagements with the press and his access outside of the State Department. Nevertheless, by the time of his death, the administration had lost most of the effectiveness of establishing this new office and the influence of what should have been one of the most public advocates for the policy.<sup>28</sup>

Lute played a critical yet informal role as a back-channel intermediary to former International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) Commander General David Petraeus, as well as other senior generals. Lute's role helped senior military officials overcome some of the normal relationship challenges characterized as "rocky" with the current National

Security Adviser Tom Donilon and other civilian White House officials.<sup>29</sup> Despite their policy differences, Lute tried to maintain working relationships with DoD and other interagency senior officials to maintain his usefulness as a broker between the two sides, while keeping the White House relationship with the Pentagon from rupturing.<sup>30</sup>

Ambassador Holbrooke's successor as SRAP, Marc Grossman, tried to sustain the core group dialogue on Afghanistan through summer and autumn 2011, even as the rest of the U.S.-Pakistan relationship was collapsing around him. Grossman hoped that as other disputes emerged, both countries could share a common desire and an intrinsic need to retain their dialogue on Afghanistan reconciliation.<sup>31</sup> Grossman's efforts, however, came to a halt, overwhelmed by the weight of the military's frustration at the Americans' and Pakistanis' unwillingness to cooperate and move forward with a joint policy on how to engage the Taliban. Grossman spent most of 2011 trying to keep the Afghan talks continuing, combating resistance from within the interagency process in Washington and suffering from a lack of assistance from Pakistan.<sup>32</sup>

Clearly, the establishment of a single coordinator for U.S. policy and whole of government strategy might have held great promise in achieving USG unity of effort toward Pakistan. Nevertheless, it is easy to see how SRAP was either ineffective in overcoming the severe bureaucratic hurdles or impotent in coordinating coherent positions among disparate agencies led by strong personalities. In failing to fully empower the SRAP to overcome these challenges, and then support the post during disagreements about the way forward, the Administration missed an important opportunity to establish shared vision as part of the USG unity of effort.

### **Personality Clashes and Internal Friction: Little Hope for Selfless Cooperation**

As the Joint Chiefs Chairman, Admiral Mullen had the power of the bully pulpit and was often called to testify before Congress as a unique expert on Pakistan within the Administration and he had the experience gained from meeting with Pakistani officials more than any other USG official. Indeed, roughly half of the recommendations adopted by the White House in its 2009 strategy review were originally recommendations from an internal Joint Staff strategy review ordered by Mullen in 2008 – including the idea of viewing Afghanistan and Pakistan as an interrelated regional problem.<sup>33</sup> Yet, despite Mullen’s centrality to the foundations of U.S. policy toward Afghanistan, the USG stance toward Pakistan was far from monolithic. Because Mullen served as an unswervingly loyal and lead agent of the President’s policy toward Pakistan, an examination of Mullen’s actions can shed light on what the baseline of the President’s policy was at any given time. Likewise, an examination of other senior officials’ actions toward Pakistan – and more specifically, how they differed from Mullen’s – can shed light on just how uncooperative USG agencies and officials often were. The story of conflicting U.S. approaches toward Pakistan highlights just how poorly the USG has been doing at establishing an atmosphere of selfless interagency cooperation – the third requirement for unity of effort.

In 2007, Mullen called Pakistan “a steadfast and historic ally.” Then in 2009, Mullen referred to Pakistan by saying, “we must help Pakistan widen its aperture in seeking out and eliminating all forms of extremism and terrorism — those who threaten not only Pakistan, but also Afghanistan, the wider South Asia region, and the globe.”<sup>34</sup>

During this period in 2009, Admiral Mullen seemed to shift from a previous, more critical approach, to a gentler, more cooperative approach with the Government of Pakistan that sought to build trust with Pakistani military leaders who remained skeptical of U.S. intentions.<sup>35</sup> Then-National Security Advisor Jim Jones opined in early 2009 that the U.S.-Pakistan alliance was bringing more clear positive results than at any time in the past seven years.<sup>36</sup> Clearly, the Administration's preferred approach toward Pakistan in 2009 was to build trust with Pakistan, and Mullen was front and center as the face of that effort.

Yet, while all of the trust-building efforts were taking place, Congress began to increase its skepticism about Islamabad's commitment to resolving the Afghan insurgency and its desire for a genuine partnership with the U.S. Simultaneously, senior U.S. officials in Islamabad began to complain increasingly about how U.S. efforts focused too heavily on security issues and about how the U.S.-Pakistan relationship overly relied on military-to-military relations. Consequently, in late 2009 and early 2010, certain officials attempted to break ranks and go their own way toward Pakistan.<sup>37</sup>

For example, in November 2009, then-National Security Advisor Jim Jones met with President Zardari, where he reportedly delivered a personal letter from the President to convey an 'expectation' that Zardai rally his country's political and national security institutions in a united campaign against regional extremism. By some accounts, Jones also told his counterparts that the U.S. was prepared to take unilateral action in the absence of rapid Pakistani movement on the security front. Shortly after this trip, the Pakistani foreign minister told reporters, "We will not do anything, more or



less, at the prodding of others.” This was followed by a letter from Zardari to the U.S. indicating that Pakistan acknowledged the shared threat but would follow its own timeline and operational plans.<sup>38</sup> In sum, Jones had abandoned the soft approach with Pakistan and opted for a more hard-nosed approach. As a consequence of the Jones visit, future efforts within a trust-building approach would be handicapped, efforts that were (at this point) continuing under Admiral Mullen. Slowly between 2009 and 2011, the USG approach shifted to one of more direct confrontation and less talk of a broader strategic partnership.

The border incident of November 2011 reinforced the futility of any future trust-based approach. During that particular border cross-fire incident, ISAF and Afghan forces killed 24 Pakistani soldiers. General John Allen, the ISAF commander who succeeded Petraeus, had only just returned from a visit to General Ashfaq Kayani, Pakistan’s Chief of Army Staff and, by nearly all accounts, Pakistan’s most important and influential leader. During his visit, Allen had hoped to improve relations that were already under strain, as if to attempt to resurrect the former more cooperative approach that Mullen led in 2009 for the White House. Yet, following the border incident, Pakistan closed the land route that provides ISAF with a large portion of its supplies and announced that it would boycott the following week’s NATO conference in Bonn, Germany on the future of Afghanistan.<sup>39</sup>

Clearly, by opting to take a hard-nosed approach of his own accord, National Security Advisor Jones demonstrated the USG’s inability to cooperate selflessly along one particular policy approach. In doing so, he undermined the President’s original stated objectives toward Pakistan and created mistrust between the U.S. and Pakistan

that future trust-based approaches, like Allen's, could not mitigate. By failing to engender an atmosphere of selfless cooperation, the USG has failed to meet a third critical requirement for unity of effort.

### **Aggravating Factors that Further Undermine Unity of Effort**

The USG's failure to establish unity of effort toward Pakistan extends further beyond its inability to establish mission-focused organizations, establish a shared vision, and engender selfless cooperation. Indeed, two additional ways that unity of effort is undermined include the absence of a clearly articulated endstate for the region and a dearth of understanding of what really makes Pakistanis tick. It is hard to see how there can be any unity of effort when there is no clarity on what you are trying to achieve.

First, the endstate for U.S. efforts in Pakistan remains unclear. In his December 2009 speech, the President described how he intended to solidify the partnership with Pakistan and make it the foundation of our combined efforts to defeat al Qaeda. While this was certainly a useful aspirational endstate, it remained unclear what specific conditions would lead the Government of Pakistan to change its mind about occasionally looking the other way in the face of violent extremism and instead act firmly against all violent extremist groups – not just the ones targeting Islamabad. Further, it was unclear just how long the U.S. intended to work toward developing this partnership. Clearly, such an effort would take decades to accomplish – but the December 2009 speech came also with a timeline for Afghanistan. Officials on all sides wondered: did

that timeline apply to Pakistan as well? And, specifically, what is the endstate for U.S. efforts in Pakistan?<sup>40</sup>

The Pakistanis are particularly perplexed on the U.S long term intent and commitment. On one hand, the stated U.S. policy goals ostensibly remain to strengthen a long term strategic partnership with Pakistan. Yet, on the other hand, Congress and the Administration consider ways to reduce aid contributions to Pakistan. And all of this is taking place as the United States intensifies drone attacks in Pakistani territory which, although having an impact on terrorist organizations, continue to stretch an already fragile relationship.<sup>41</sup>

Uncertainty about the U.S. endstate in Pakistan is not limited to the Pakistanis; rather, U.S. officials also have only a vague understanding of what the endstate in Pakistan looks like. In 2009, Ambassador Holbrooke described the military commitment to the region as not being open ended, but with a civilian commitment that will exist for a longer time, and definitely beyond when the majority of the military forces return home. How to measure success against our strategy, however, is as of yet unclear and in this context, “we’ll know it when we see it,” he said in reference to defining success in Afghanistan and Pakistan.<sup>42</sup>

A second aggravating factor that hinders USG unity of effort is the fact that many U.S. officials fail to recognize that Pakistan’s fundamental goal is to defend itself against its rival, India. As a result, every olive branch that the U.S. extends to India is felt as a slap in the face to Islamabad. Consequently, Pakistan remains doubtful that the United States would have Pakistan’s back in a conflict with India. It is no wonder that Pakistan hesitates giving up its influence with the insurgent groups, which many Pakistani

officials believe will give Pakistan strategic depth in the form of a strategic assembly area for a counterattack against India in Afghanistan and an unconventional warfare capability in any future conflict with India. Therefore, Islamabad plays it both ways: it cooperates with Washington just enough to be useful, but simultaneously obstructs the coalition enough to make it near impossible to end the Afghan insurgency.<sup>43</sup>

Yet U.S. policy seems to ignore this reality, relying on simple carrots and sticks. At the same time, the United States seemingly develops policy toward India and Pakistan as if they were two separate policy efforts when, in fact, more could be done if they were treated with a more holistic approach. As long as U.S. agencies and officials struggle to truly understand what makes Pakistan tick, it is unlikely that the United States will be able to act toward Pakistan with unified effort.<sup>44</sup>

### **Implications: Unity of Effort is Needed Now, Perhaps More than Ever**

According to some observers, U.S. relations with Pakistan are at an all-time low.<sup>45</sup> As of May 2012, the continued diplomatic impasse between the two countries seems to have claimed another bureaucratic victim, as the current U.S. Ambassador to Pakistan, Cameron Munter, recently reported that he would step down. Mr. Munter's reputation in the time he has served as Ambassador has been one of a conciliator with more of a long range vision driving his actions and as a unifier for policy implementation. He will reportedly leave because of frustration with his own side, as the Pentagon and CIA impose a harder-nosed approach to Pakistan. Although U.S. officials insist that suggestions of an internal policy rift are "overblown,"<sup>46</sup> the reality is

another key senior leader looks to be leaving his post because of the inability of the interagency to come to agreement on the way forward with the U.S. effort.

As we continue into 2012 and 2013, there is a real danger that another bloody incident between the two militaries could occur and worsen the crisis. There are several triggers for underlying tensions to explode. First, between 10,000 and 20,000 U.S. Marines are expected to redeploy from Helmand and Kandahar in southern Afghanistan to the provinces of eastern Afghanistan to tackle the virulent Taliban network of Jalaluddin Haqqani in the spring of 2012.<sup>47</sup> This could raise tensions with Pakistan, and could risk another dangerous incident and even increase the chances of direct U.S.-Pakistan clashes. Clearly, interagency unity of effort is needed now more than ever to ensure the hard-fought gains of the past many years do not slip away.

The national security system's structural deficiency in interagency coordination is persistent but not immutable.<sup>48</sup> To set itself on a more effective course, the United States should consider making three key adjustments that can help improve its unity of effort in Pakistan. Specifically, the United States could improve its mission-focused organization by establishing interagency high-performance teams; it can improve its shared vision by using Presidential leadership to make the hard-nosed approach the official U.S. approach; and, it can improve its ability to foster selfless cooperation among U.S. agencies by increasing the importance of reaching a negotiated settlement with Taliban senior leaders – and by putting SRAP Marc Grossman at the forefront of those efforts.

### ***Improve Mission-Focused Organization: Interagency High-Performance Teams***

While federal officials clearly grasp the importance of interagency coordination and collaboration, they find it difficult to put theory into practice. It is for this reason that effective multi-agency structures are crucial.<sup>49</sup>

Clearly, when the president successfully overrides bureaucratic conflict at the policy development stage, it is easy to see how implementation problems can arise later if presidential attention wanders. Within the case study literature, in the absence of direct and constant presidential intervention, the development and implementation of integrated national security strategies often become problematic as policy coherence declines under the weight of bureaucratic infighting, unless a pre-existing multi-agency organization is in place to mitigate it.<sup>50</sup>

The key to transformation of the national security system and the strategic management process is developing a framework that organizes, guides, connects, and sequences any specific actions within a broad left and right limit but always with the goal of moving forward towards realizing the larger vision. The Joint Staff PACC was an excellent example of such a multi-agency team; yet, as described above, it has become increasingly irrelevant.

If the USG created small interagency teams that are mission-focused and interagency-centric with a clear reporting chain of authority for the purpose of increasing collaboration across organizational boundaries and managing missions of national importance from policy through implementation and evaluation – In effect, these teams cover everything from “end-to-end,” then the USG could more timely generate options for U.S. senior leaders and maintain better consistency of the USG messaging to the

Pakistanis. The creation of such a team for the U.S.-Pakistan policy process is one of the ways the U.S. can better coordinate the interagency and present a more unified, long term vision for the future of the U.S.-Pakistan relationship.

***Establish a New Shared Vision: Presidential Assertion of a Hard-Nosed Approach***

The only way the United States can actually get what it wants out of Pakistan is to make credible threats to retaliate if Pakistan does not comply with U.S. demands and offer rewards only in return for cooperation given. The United States has shown that the “sticks” that should follow the “carrots” are mostly soft rotten ones.<sup>51</sup> Pakistan must start playing ball or face malign neglect at best and, if required, a more active isolationism. To do this, Pakistan’s importance to our success in Afghanistan needs to be reduced. Although the military continues to reduce the amount of supplies flowing through Pakistan by expanding the infrastructure along the Northern Distribution Network (the Russia and Central Asia route), more can be done to limit our dependence on Pakistan such as leveraging other regional actors to provide support to our efforts in Afghanistan and determining where best to engage should be one of the first tasks a new interagency organization could tackle.

Washington must also get over its fear that ending U.S. aid would lead to state collapse in Pakistan, a radical Islamist takeover, or the loss of nuclear weapons. The United States must remember that Pakistanis determine their own political future. If the substantial investment already made by the U.S. has not improved the situation, where is the evidence that stopping continued U.S. investment would lead to collapse? Remember that the Pakistani military remains the most respected institution in that

country and it is in their best interest to remain so. As for Islamist takeover, the leadership of Pakistan has proven able to take actions when really called for, as they chose to do in the Swat valley in 2009. Finally, the risk of a nuclear weapon being lost to terrorists remains real even in today's 'stable' Pakistan. Pakistan's nuclear posture is designed as a deterrent to India and although there is risk, Pakistan will not alter that posture, regardless of who is running the country. These are all reasons to encourage the U.S. with a more unified interagency effort to look at a weighted stick option for the future of our strategic engagement with Pakistan.<sup>52</sup>

In Admiral Mullen's final remarks is the message that the United States must get tougher with Pakistan. Here is a man who spent 8 years working to bring the strategic relationship closer and is the one senior U.S. leader with the most time spent in Pakistan; implied is the message that a variety of gentler and personal forms of persuasion have failed.<sup>53</sup>

While all recent USG remarks and actions seem to engender this new, hard-nosed approach, official policy remains the same as 2009, and many official remarks continue to suggest that the U.S. seeks a long-term strategic partnership. U.S. policy rhetoric must begin to align with U.S. policy action. By taking bold Presidential leadership, and by clearly describing how the U.S. approach to Pakistan has become harder-edged, the United States can establish a new, unifying vision with a clear endstate, the USG's ability to influence Pakistan in a favorable direction would increase significantly.



***Engender Selfless Cooperation: Orient all USG Agency Activity to Support the Main Effort: Afghan Reconciliation***

The most realistic hope for the future is for the U.S. and Pakistan to jointly develop a political reconciliation plan for Afghanistan that could end the Taliban insurgency, bring the Taliban to the table and initiate a four way dialogue among the Taliban, Kabul, Washington and Islamabad. While Pakistan has stated they support reconciliation, the United States has been more ambivalent. The divisions within the Obama administration may now be coming to an end, however, as all parts of the USG recognize that there can be no orderly U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan—nor will Karzai have a chance to succeed—without a negotiated end to the insurgency. SRAP Marc Grossman is purportedly in the lead for this effort, yet his activities have represented just one arm of a multi-pronged approach. Yet, if the SRAP is to have any leverage and ability to negotiate with Pakistan, he must be able to show that his efforts are *the* main efforts of the U.S. approach to the region.<sup>54</sup> Indeed, Afghan reconciliation is not just a policy issue among policy issues — it is *the* overarching political endstate for the United States in the region and the best chance to achieve a level of lasting stability. By declaring Afghan reconciliation as the primary line of effort among others, the United States can avoid situations like that of Jones in 2009, where the efforts of individual actors and agencies undermined those of another.

**Conclusion**

There are no quick fixes to achieve U.S. national security interests in Pakistan. The danger of failure is real and the implications are grave. The two

countries say that they are trying to build a strategic partnership, but the trust deficit of the past is at an all-time high, which prohibits any possibility of a trust-based relationship as a feasible endstate in Pakistan. As a consequence of each individual agency trying to implement an impossible approach, USG agencies instead merely try to secure their own interests in Pakistan in their own way. Put simply, there are as many U.S. approaches to Pakistan as there are U.S. agencies in Pakistan.

By examining U.S. actions in Pakistan, it is clear that there has been very little unity of effort. First, by handicapping one of the USG's most effective and proven organizations, the Joint Staff PACC, the United States has limited its ability to develop a mission-focused organization rather than a parochially-focused organization. Second, by failing to empower the SRAP, the Administration missed a unique opportunity to establish a strong shared vision for Pakistan. Third, this lack of shared vision has hindered the third requirement for strong interagency unity of effort: an atmosphere of selfless cooperation. And, this lack of unity is further exacerbated by the lack of a clearly articulated endstate and a poor understanding of what really makes Pakistanis tick. Combined together, this has resulted in the drifting of strategy implementation through various soft and hard options.

Despite the fact that United States-Pakistani relations are at an all time low, it is not too late to unify USG efforts in a coherent and more effective approach. First, the USG could resurrect its ability to put forth a mission-focused organization by forming small interagency high-performance teams. Second, the President could establish a clear shared vision by breaking from the disingenuous, trust-based rhetoric of the past and announce a new, harder-edged approach that is more in line with the actions that

the United States has been taking in recent months. Third, the President could make clear that, within the new U.S. approach to Pakistan, Afghan reconciliation is the main effort, which could foster more selfless cooperation among various agencies with varied interests.

Surely, the problem that the United States and the international community faces in Pakistan is complex, and it poses consequential implications for regional and global stability. Seeking unity of effort in Pakistan is an imperative for the United States in the coming years to ensure hard-fought gains in the region are not lost and to ensure that the effects of U.S. efforts in Pakistan are greater than the sum of their parts in the upcoming period of declining resources and political will. The U.S. simply must be better at synchronizing its efforts across the interagency spectrum to be more effective at influencing Pakistan's strategic calculus.

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